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03/18/2004

Boris Farber

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02/01/2006

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EXAMINER

KAYES, SEAN PHILLIP

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

2841

DATE MAILED: 02/01/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Objections

1. Claim 6 is objected to because of the following informalities:
2. In claim 6 line 5, "sterilization by placed on a scale" utilizes improper grammar.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Asher (US 4891755) in view of Wike (US 6427915.)
5. With respect to claim 1 Asher discloses a method for automated tracking and identification nonuniform elements of a set, said method comprising the steps: initial weighing of and recording said weight of said completed set of nonuniform elements (column 1 line 66 – column 2 line 2); weighing of and recording said weight of each individual element of said set (column 2 lines 3-9 The individual items are measured in order to determine the weight of each class of item.); and after disassembly and

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reassembly of said set, verifying set completeness by comparison of the final weight and element quantity of said set (column 1 line 66 – column 2 line 2 and column 2 lines 10-17.) Asher does not disclose recording of an image of each individual element of said set.

6. Wike discloses a digital camera device 94a, figure 1. Furthermore, Cameras are very well known with regards to the art of inventory control.

7. At the time of the invention it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to include a camera, as taught by Wike, with Asher's invention.

8. The suggestion or motivation for doing so would be to resolve disputes. For instance if a customer claims that no item was removed from a mini-bar and that the invention is in error, the recorded camera images could be viewed to either verify the customer's claims or disprove them.

9. With respect to claim 2 Asher in view of Wike discloses the method of claim 1, wherein the weighing of each individual element of said set is prompted by an automatic tracking system and recorded within an electronic database for future recall (column 1 lines 66-column2 line 2, column 2 lines 10-17, and item 15, establish wherein the device reads the weight of the items and the recorded weight is than sent to and recorded by a central computer for billing purposes. Furthermore, the central computer would read and store the changes in weight as each new item is inserted in the mini-bar (during stocking.)

10. With respect to claim 3 Asher in view of Wike discloses the method of claim 2, wherein the recording of an image of each individual element of said set is prompted by

an automatic tracking system and recorded within an electronic database for future recall (94a figure 1 of Wike is a digital camera.)

11. With respect to claim 4 Asher in view of Wike discloses the method of claim 3, wherein if set completeness cannot be verified, said automatic tracking system performs a counting and identification method comprising: a. Comparing the differences between said initial weighing and said final weighing to determine a differential weight (column 1 lines 66-column 2 line 2); b. Comparing said differential weight against the weight of each individual element (column 1 lines 66-column 2 line 9); and C. Identifying a list of possible individual elements that could comprise said differential weight (column 2 lines 2-17.)

12. With respect to claim 5 Asher in view of Wike discloses an automatic tracking system for performing the method of claim 1, comprising: a scale (13 figure 1, Asher) for initial weighing of said completed set of nonuniform elements and each said individual element of said set; an image processing application (94a figure 1, Wike) for capturing, storing, and processing said image of each set element for storage in a computer data file; and electronic database (computer mentioned in column 2 lines 10-17 of Asher) recording and retrieval means for recording, retrieving, comparing and manipulating weight and image data identified or captured by said scale and said image processing application.

13. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Asher (US 4891755) in view of Almogaibil (US 5608193.)

14. With respect 6 Asher discloses a method for automated tracking and identification of instruments in a room environment comprising: a. Measuring the weight of individual instruments belonging to a complete standardized instrument set prior to an action by placed on a scale each said instrument one at a time according to a prompt (column 2 lines 2-9, each item's weigh is recorded in order to create a set); b. Storing the weights of the individual instrument in a computer data file (column 2 lines 2-17, the pertinent information is recorded on computer); c. Assigning a serial number to the complete standardized instrument set for allowing retrieval of information regarding instrument weights during an operation (column 2 lines 10-17, serial number is equivalent to a room number.) d. Automatically verifying set completeness during set assembly by the automatic counting and comparing of weights of measured pieces with nominal weights of this particular type of individual instrument stored in a database (column 1 line 66-column 2 line 17); e. If a mismatch occurs, then interactively pointing to potentially missing parts identified from said database (column 1 line 66-column 2 line 17.)

15. Asher does not discloses wherein said instruments are surgical or wherein the process is sterilization.

Almogabil discloses wherein a device such as that disclosed by Asher can be utilized to track tools and or medical/surgical tools (see Almogabil's abstract.) Furthermore, it would be obvious to sterilize the equipment prior to it's use and Asher does disclose that the items should be measured prior to use.

At the time of the invention it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to use Asher's invention in the use of tracking surgical tools as taught by Almogaibil.

The suggestion or motivation for doing so would be to allow a surgeon to track his tools and equipment in a safe accurate manner.

At the time of the invention it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to sterilize the instruments after measuring their weight.

The suggestion or motivation would have been to prevent infecting the patient in the course of the operation.

Allowable Subject Matter

16. Claims 7-10 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

17. The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: The prior art does not disclose or suggest the claimed "automated process of determining location of weight change by means of a camera and image processing" in combination with the remaining claim elements as set forth in claim 7-10.

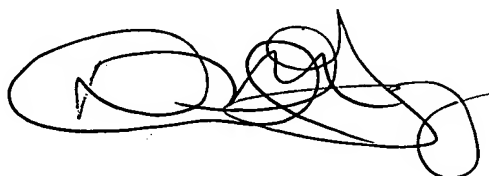
Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Sean Kayes whose telephone number is (571) 272-8931. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:00-5:00.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David Gray can be reached on (571)272-2119. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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SK
1/26/06

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Gray', with a large, stylized circular flourish at the end.

David Gray
Primary Examiner